PERSONAL LANDSCAPE

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CONTENTS.

Ideas About Poetry (VI) 2
Anatolia : Second Recitative by *Elie Papadimitriou* 3
Europe by *Hugh Gordon Porteus* 5
Dancer at Shubra by *Bernard Spencer* 6
Perfumes by *Terence Tiller* 7
Three Clerigrams by *Diana Gould* 8
Epigram by *Robert Liddell* 8
The King of Asini by *George Seferis* 9
Ornithology by *Robin Fedden* 11
Byron by *Lawrence Durrell* 12
Shakespeare and Black Beauty by *Gwyn Williams* 16

IDEAS ABOUT POETRY VI.

Mathaios Pascalis His Ideas About Poems.

All poems written or unwritten exist. I don't mean a platonic but a biological existence. Their relation to their written form is the relation of the model to its portrait. The special ability of the poet is to see them : that's why the poets are sometimes called *seers*.

The faculty of seeing them makes the poet, the faculty of painting (i.e. writing) them makes the talent of the poet. That's why we may have (and had) poets without talent; but mere talent without the poetical gift (i.e. the gift of the seer) is inconceivable.

Poems do not live alone. Cases of solitary poems are extremely rare. As I write I can think of very few examples : in Greek the *Woman of Zante,* in English *The Waste Land,* in French *Le Jounet d'Arvers*. Usually and normally poems form large crowds subject to special *sociological laws* and suffering all sorts of social diseases, plagues and starvation, revolutions and dissolutions, wars and golden ages, unemployment and kirtle control, etc.—These social happenings in « poemical» societies do not correspond necessarily to the accidents of our own human societies. You may have perfectly peaceful poems in times of human war (e.g. *La Jeune Parque*), or bourgeois poems in times of human revolution (e.g. *Maiakovsky*), or revolutionary poems in a quite unrevolutionary period (e.g. *Aeschylus*). That is why poems, really seen, so often astonish contemporary audiences. And the latter accuse the poet. But the poet is all right; because *he saw* them—exactly like Orestes the Erinnys.

Poems of the same kind meet usually in special places; they have their clubs. On this point I rely on my own experience which informs me that heroic poems meet in ships on a calm sea; poems about slumber in battle fields; poems about rapes in waterless islands; poems about death, in green meadows at noon; poems about happiness on peaks of mountains; poems about self-indulgence on staircases (think of *Ash Wednesday*); and limericks in the bathroom.

G. S.

ANATOLIA.

Second recitative [1].

Thus words blew about, and the highways
Filled with carts,
And inside them all the foremost men of property,
Owners of winepresses, bakeries and shops.
And the world-travelled shipmasters,
And those that speak the literate language with the «ri».
And those who wore European trowsers;
Villages of brave repute, Vourlä, Seudikyōy, Koukloutsā :
The agoras are humming, vineyards empty, at feasts,
Some words bang like gongs,
Men's sides shiver like panes of glass
Wherein sing pent-up hatreds—
Hatreds like abbesses, not yesterday's nuns.—
For so they are, customs of stern homelands,
Where they rejoice easily, and kill easily,
And here the whitewashed Turkish villages,
Even on good days offered the passer-by neither word nor flower;
But the oxen moo, shut in with the women.
And the roads round about Smyrna
Smell of the miracle before it is revealed :
Deserted the police-boxes, deserted the famous cafés
Where every client had the sign
Of his fez on the wall where he reclined,
And in the stinking Jewish quarter neither
Jews in nightgowns nor Jewesses in clogs—
All had hidden, being in fact Greek;
And the ships of this dawn,

[1] The *First Recitative* was published in *Personal Landscape* No. 2, in March 1942. It is hoped to publish the *Third Recitative* in the next number.

Warships and transports full of troops
And in their midst "The Averoff" :
The Christians hail them from the shores :
And how have women found time
To hang banners from balcony to balcony
So when the sun rises Smyrna is ready
To take flight with all her canvas on?

From the barges the troops land
In heavy equipment, slabs of the wharves
Split, and hearts at each leap delight;
First come men of the islands
From happy villages in Chios, Samos, Mytiline,
The-first-called-up as green conscripts
For an archipelago division;
But wars had given them curly moustaches
With pointed tips like wings :
Then came the Euzön battalion
Of Roümeli, Thessaly, and the Moraïtes,
The followers of Gounaris :
And now the Cretan gendarmerie—
The swaying of their hips,
The straightness of their necks,
Causing the balconies and windows to melt.

Roses are sprinkled on them
And the bishop in his golden stole—
O Chrysostom! doomed to martyrdom—
Stands in a carriage and blesses them
While his tears stream down;
The soldiers stoop and gather up the roses,
They stop their rifle-barrels with them!

Elie Papadimitriou.

EUROPE.

Europe, whose cities open and shut like blooms
Whose cemeteries yawn beneath the unsealing bombs
Leaves man a Lazarus, daily ever amazed.

Walking in madness through the firework gardens
Under the fountain of tears, the lunar ferns,
Where comets are more common than falling leaves.

Wetting the eyes of loves like stars like flies
Humming and glowing nightly sicklewise
Under a hooded moon whose lid hides blood.

Stumbling on guts and nerves of others' lives
Which sting or bleed events like fearful sieves
Insinuant and sudden as snakes disturbed.

While birds like swords make passes in the dark
Screaming like rent brocades, while through the park
The coupled dead applaud until the dawn.

Europe whose child of darkness knows his doom
And burning in the furnace of the womb
Trapped in the catacombs roars out his right.

Since nothing matters but the golden heart
That keeps its jewelled circuit to the chart
More pokerfaced than clocks with hands at twelve

Hugh Gordon Porteus.

DANCER AT SHUBRA.

At first we heard the jingling of her ornaments
as she delayed beyond the trap of light,
and glimpsed her lingering pretence
her bare feet and the music were at difference :
and then the strings grew wild and drew her in.

And she came soft as paws and danced desire at play
or triumphing desire, and locked her hands
stretched high, and in the dance's sway
hung like a body to be flogged: then wrenched away,
or was a wave from breasts down to the knees.

And as the music built to climax and she leaned
naked in her dancing skirt, and was supreme,
her dance's stormy argument
had timid workday things for all environment;
men's awkward clothes and chairs her skin exclaimed against.

Bernard Spencer.

PERFUMES.

For Z. M. B.

Not every ghost has died before it haunts :
perfumes it seems have shadows, and will throw
days before them those thin beckoning scents :
unnamed, as the first sounds of poems grow
—formless and soft, like far-off instruments.

Mistily three days round me, blind men's trees,
changing as eyes, bodiless odours have lain :
the lemon-garden or the heat of bees ;
November beaches' salt and iodine ;
plushy church-air ; lips' faint fragrances.

Now as the poem read, creating more
than word or reader were, grows firm and thrills
like a cello between thighs, the form is here :
your perfume round me like the death of bells,
and you moving the sweetness of the air.

Because our hands trail in each other as though
a child's through water, and refuse goodnight,
I carry perfume back with me, and you,
your body the bell's singing heart : the sweet
perpetual ghost again ; but this time true.

Terence Tiller.

THREE CLERIGRAMS.

I

Nietsche
Was a cruel
Tietsche
But Goethe
Wouldn't
Oethe
Fly.

II

Rousseau
Était dousseau
Jolies dames
Mais Pizarro
Était bizarro
Point de vue des femmes.

III

MONTAGNES RUSSES.

Bizet got easily
Dizet
While Gounod
Was sounod
Vercome.

Diana Gould.

ON A WAR-POET.

How fit that you should write about the war
And tell us what they fought each other for—
An empty skull upon a village green
Did this for Peterkin and Wilhelmine.

Robert Liddell.

THE KING OF ASINI.

Ἀσινην τὲ...

All morning round and round the castle we were searching,
Beginning from the shadowy side where the sea,
Green and without reflections—breast of the murdered peacock—
Accepted us like Time, with never a gap in it.
Veins of the rock came downwards from on high,
Ribbed vines and naked, many-branched, reliving
At the touch of the water, which followed by the eye
Tried to escape the tiresome cradle-swinging,
Losing strength by small degrees.

From the sunny side a long beach wide open
And the light splashing jewels on the great walls.
No living thing about, the wild doves all gone,
And the King of Asini whom we had searched for these two years
Unknown; forgotten even by Homer.
Only one word in the Iliad and that uncertain,
Dropped here like the gold sepultural mask :
You tapped it once—remember the echo? Hollow in the light
Like a dry jar in the dug earth
And the same echo in the sea with our oars
The King of Asini a void now under the mask
Always with us, with us, underneath a name.

And his children sculptures,
His desires the beat of birds wings and the wind
Between the spaces of his meditations, and his ships
Anchored in an invisible harbour
Under the mask a void.

Behind the huge eyes the curving ringlets
In relief on the golden cover of our lives
A shadowy point which travels like a fish
In the dawn-blue waters of the sea, when you see it.

A void that is always among us;
And the bird which fled away last winter
With a broken wing,
The ark of life,
And the woman who went suddenly away to play
With summer's dogtooth
And the soul which searched the underworld chirping
And the country like the great plane-leaf dragged away by the torrent of the sun.

With old monuments and the contemporary regret.

And the poet lingers here, looking at the stones and wondering
Does there still exist then
Among these broken lines, points, hollows, and curves,
Does there still exist
Here where the rain and wind and all decay in passing meet,
The motion of a face, shape of a tenderness
Of those who diminished so strangely in our lives,
Who remained shadows of waves, thoughts in the sea's limitlessness :
Or perhaps not nothing but only the weight remains,
The nostalgia of the weight of a living being,
Here where we live now unsubstantially entangled
Like the withes of horrible willow bound up in the length of our hopelessness,
While yellow streams bring down : rushes uprooted with mud
Image of a face petrified with a decision of sharp bitterness.
And the poet a void.

Shieldbearer, the warring sun comes up
And from the depths of the cave a frightened bat
Strikes upon the light like the arrow on the shield

Might it have been the King of Asini
We hunted for so carefully on this acropolis,
Our fingers touching now and then his touch upon the stones?

George Seferis.

ORNITHOLOGY.

With wing-spread like a drifting cloud
They hold the empty latitudes,
Their shadows in antarctic seas
Float across the stumbling waves.
Disdaining whalers, whaling ships,
And sychophantic fussy gulls,
They cruise above the rustling straits
Or skim a glassy sea with banking wing
And clack a horny bill.
This only fish have seen.

And none have seen their flapping wings,
Clumsy in mating fury on the snow,
And plumes all torn to blood
And the icy air stirred with their cries.
A nest once found by stranded men
Is sketched in diaries of the lost
Whose message trailed away to death—
A ragged mound upon the Pole.

Circling on the world's bald end
They move the time at will [1],
Their sailing wings reverse the clock,
Put back the sad revolving earth,
And youth and all good things there follow them;
And freezing suns, which age and burn us here,
In vain go down on them,
These lucky timeless birds.

Robin Fedden.

[1] 4 miles distant from the Pole, any flying speed of over $2\pi \times 4$ *m.p.d.*, in either direction, makes hay of formal time. (In more complicated questions such as axial precession the birds are not interested.)

BYRON.

The trees have been rapping
At these empty casements for a year,
Have been rapping and tapping and
Repeating to us here
Omens of the defeating wind,
Omens of the defeating mind.

Headquarters of a war
House in a fever-swamp
Headquarters of a mind at odds.

Before me now lies Byron and behind,
Belonging to the Gods,
Another Byron of the feeling
Shown in this barbered hairless man,
Splashed by the candle-stems
In his expensive cloak and wig
And boots upon the dirty ceiling.

Hobbled by this shadow,
My own invention of myself, I go
In wind, rain, stars, climbing
This ladder of compromises into Greece
Which like the Notself looms before
My politics, my invention, and my war.
None of it but belongs
To this farded character
Whose Grecian credits are his old excuse
By freedom holding Byron in abuse.

Strange for one who was happier
Tuned to women, to seek and sift
In the heart's simple mesh,
To know so certainly
Under the perfume and the politics

What undertow of odours haunts the flesh :
Could once resume them all
In lines that gave me rest
To watch the fat fly Death
Hunting the skeleton down in each,
Like hairs in plaster growing,
Promising under the living red the yellow—
I helped these children by their sex
Discountenance the horrid fellow.

I have been a secretary (I sing)
A secretary to love

In this bad opera landscape
Trees, fevers, and quarrels
Spread like sores : and the gilded
Abstractions like our pride and honour
On this brute age close like doors
Which pushing does not budge.

Outside them, I speak for the great average.

My disobedience became
A disguise for style in a new dress
Item : a lock of hair.
Item : a minature, myself aged three,
The innocent and the deformed
Pinned up in ribbons to posterity.

And now here comes
The famous disposition to weep,
To renounce. Picture to yourself
A lord who encircled his life
With women's arms; or another
Who rode through the wide world howling
And searching for his mother.

Picture to yourself a third : a cynic.
This weeping published rock—
The biscuits and the glass of soda-water :
Under Sunium's white cliffs
Where I laboured with my knife
To cut a *Byron* there—
I was thinking softly of my daughter.

A cock to Aesculapius no less...

You will suggest we found only
In idleness and indignation here,
Plucked by the offshore dancers, brigs
Like girls, and ports of call,
In our commerce with Liberty the whore
Through these unbarbered priests
And garlic-eating captains :
Fame like the only porch in a wall
To squeeze our shelter from
By profit and by circumstance
Assist this rocky nation's funeral.

The humane and lawful in whom
Art and manners mix, who sent us here,
This sort of figures from a drawing-room
Should pause themselves once
Under these legendary islands :
A landscape hurled into the air
And fallen on itself; should see
Where the frail spines of rivers
Soft on the backbone intersect and scribble
These unbarbered gangs of freedom dribble
Like music down a page and come
Into the valleys with their small
Ordnance which barks and jumps.
I, Byron the soft head of my heart bumps
Inside me as on a vellum drum.

Other enemies intervene here,
Not less where the valet serves
In a muddle of papers and consequences :
Not less in places where I walk alone
With Conscience, the defective : my defences
Against a past which bears behind,
Writing and rewriting to the bone
Those famous letters in my mind.

Time grows short. Now the trees
Are rapping the empty casements.
Fevers are closing on us at last—
So long desired an end of service
To the flesh and its competitions of endurance.
There is so little time. Fletcher
Tidies the bed at dusk and brings me coffee.

You, the speaking and the feeling who come after :
I sent you something once—it must be
Somewhere in *Juan*—it has not reached you yet.
O watch for this remote
But very self of Byron and of me,
Blown empty on the white cliffs of the mind,
A dispossessed His Lordship writing you
A message in a bottle dropped at sea.

Lawrence Durrell.

SHAKESPEARE AND BLACK BEAUTY.

The unsupported suggestion has been made by Mr. G. B. Harrison that the dark woman of the Sonnets was actually a negress, a certain Lucy Negro who appears to have taken part in the Inns of Court revels in 1594, an entertainment in which the Earl of Southampton was concerned. He associates her too with a black-skinned beauty, possibly a courtesan, who is referred to in epigrams by Guilpin and Weever. I shall make no attempt to support this specific identification by internal evidence, but I propose to demonstrate that dark skin, if not actual blackness, held a peculiar fascination for Shakespeare, that this is observable in his early work, and that important and significant echoes of this interest persist in the later plays. The inevitable answer of academic criticism to this kind of enquiry is that reference to the blackness of a woman in Elizabethan English means that she had dark hair, which was a stigma in an age when, partly to flatter the red-haired queen, the fashion was for fair hair in women. This is true, and the conventional use of the word "black" is to be found in Shakespeare as well as the conventional contempt for brown or tanned skin. Aeneas makes a courtier's judgement when he says,

> ... The Grecian dames are sunburnt and not worth
> The splinter of a lance. Troil and Cress, I, iii.

But this is not the whole truth and to allow oneself to be frightened off a dangerous subject in this way is to miss one of the most curious and distinguishing aspects of Shakespeare's mental make-up. I say distinguishing because this interest in blackness which I hope to establish is, as far as drama goes, peculiar to Shakespeare. Moors had long been a regular feature of court masques and entertainments and torch-bearers frequently had their faces blacked. Leontes refers to this practice

> ... But they were false
> As o'erdyed blacks. Winter's Tale I, ii,

and in doing so reveals Shakespeare's knowledge that the so-called black-

amoor was very often a shade of brown. In the entertainment at Lord Unton's wedding in 1580 there were five pairs of cupids, naked children with diaphanous head-dresses, five of them black and five white, and blackness continued to be popular in masques well into the XVII^th century; but the serious treatment of dark-skinned characters in drama by Shakespeare was as new and as revolutionary a procedure as the later adoption of the peasant or workman as a possible hero of fiction.

It is striking that all Shakespeare's black characters are in some way sympathetic. Even the brutal Aaron behaves admirably when it is a question of his colour, and whenever anything unpleasant is said in the plays about blackness it is said by an unpleasant character. This interest in and sympathy with blackness is most conspicious in the early plays. The Prince of Morocco in The Merchant of Venice is an early sketch for Othello, they are both associated with Venice, and his courtship of Portia is of particular interest. Seeming to anticipate objection, he begins with a proud defence of his colour, "the shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun", which he would change only if it were necessary to gain her love. But Portia, to whose ridicule of her English, Scottish, French, German and Italian suitors we have just listened, assures him that he stands as "fair" with her as any of the others. Desdemona, of course, goes further than this with Othello. He is called by Roderigo "thick lips", by Iago "an old black ram", "a lascivious Moor", and Brabantio refers to

"the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as though, to fear, not to delight".

But Desdemona, who, according to her father, has "shunned
The wealthy curled darlings of our nation"

feels no such repugnance, and with an innocent cunning teaches the Moor to make love to her.

Both these delicately nurtured white girls, courted as they are by the most brilliant young men of the society about them, turn favourably to dark men. Aaron, in Titus Andronicus, who resembles Othello in race and colour and Iago in nature, is beloved by Tamora, Queen of the Goths, whose nordic blondness finds no cause for repulsion in the embraces of her black lover.

It must be remembered that for Shakespeare and his audience a Moor or Moroccan was a blackamoor, a black man. Even if the internal evidence were not enough to establish this, and it permits of no doubt, there is a 1595 drawing of a scene in a production of Titus Andronicus which shows Aaron as pitch black and Tamora as fair and with a nose rather like Elizabeth's. What does upset Tamora is the black child which results from the union, but even here what really disturbs is not the blackness of the child but the effect its appearance may have on her royal reputation. She therefore asks Aaron to destroy it and calls out in him a response whose nobility we cannot fail to admire. The child is, quite naturally, beautiful to him, and the idea of it is clearly not intended by Shakespeare to fill us with any disgust. For the nurse who carries it to Aaron it is "as loathsome as the toad" but Aaron asks, "Is black so base a hue?" and calls it "sweet blossom". He defends his colour thus :

> Ye white-limed walls! ye alehouse painted signs!
> Coal-black is better than another hue,
> In that it scorns to bear another hue.

(There is a very interesting ambiguity in this passage which may be another clue towards the unravelling of the mystery of the emotional triangle of the Sonnets. It has already been pointed out that Sonnet 20 with its line :

> A man in hue all hues in his controlling

may indicate the masculine object of Shakespeare's love, possibly a boy actor named Hugh or Hughes, who afterwards became involved with the dark woman. This passage is even more suggestive with its play upon the verb to bear). Black skin not only disdains the use of cosmetics, but is, according to Aaron, superior in being incapable of blushing.

Shakespeare's interest in the idea that a dark-skinned woman does not use make-up is seen again in Love's Labours Lost. Act IV, scene iii begins with Biron bewailing that he has fallen in love. He says, "I am toiling in a pitch, pitch that defiles : defile! a foul word". Soon after there is a reference to Juno as an Ethiop, and then the King taunts Biron on the "blackness" of his love, saying,

By heaven, thy love is black as ebony.

Biron retorts,

Is ebony like her? O wood divine!
A wife of such wood were felicity.....
No face is fair that is not full so black... (note here the same play upon the word "fair" as in Portia's speech to Morocco).
Her favour turns the fashion of the days,
For native blood is counted painting now,
And therefore red, that would avoid dispraise,
Paints itself black to imitate her brow.....
Your mistresses dare never come in rain
For fear their colours should be washed away.

I do not suggest that Rosaline in this play was a black woman, but I do observe here an interest in blackness which is an overtone to the mere defence of black hair which alone is dramatically necessary. It is not merely a question of hair colour, the face is specifically mentioned, and black-haired English-women have skin which is as white as any other, and are equally given to the use of comestics. Again one thinks of the dark woman of the Sonnets.

Sonnet 127 defends black beauty, and in Sonnet 131 Shakespeare says,

Thy black is fairest in my judgement's place.

Sonnet 130 says,

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

Black hair in an English woman is hardly ever wiry, in a negress or mulatto it is frequently so. Then again remembering that the dark woman does not paint her face, how much easier it is to understand Sonnet 83, beginning :

I never saw that you did painting need,
And therefore to your fair no painting set.

In other words, since you use no cosmetics, since your dark beauty is such that no painting can improve it, I have not thought it necessary or possible to praise your beauty in my verse.

The Midsummer Night's Dream has a beautiful black child, Titania's little

changeling Indian boy, whose mother is dead, and it is in this play that we are told of the power of love which brings the frantic lover to "see Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt". We are carried by inevitable association to the "tawny front" of the Egyptian Queen. There is another link. The First Quarto of The Merchant of Venice gives the stage direction : Enter Morochus a tawny Moor. The word tawny was afterwards commonly associated with Moors. There are inumerable cases of which a typical one is this sentence from Owen's book on Pembrokeshire, 1603, "They seeme more like tawney Moores, then people of this lande". Mrs Centlivre in 1717 writes, "There's a Black, a Tawnymoor and a Frenchman", and the word was regularly used in xviith century for the colour of a North American Indian or a North African. The word came to be used as a noun. The London Gazette for 1681 carried a notice, "Run away... a Tall slender Indian Tawney". And an interesting association of the gipsy and the Moor is found in the following remark in the Earl of Nottingham's Journal, 1605, "Divers Gypsies (as they termed them) men and women, dauncing and tumbling much after the Morisco fashion". It is not surprising therefore to find Cleopatra, who herself has hopped through the public streets, exaggerating her tawnyness to blackness in a moment of self-commiseration, and referring to herself as one "with Phoebus' amorous pinches black", a line which recalls Morocco's "shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun". For Shakespeare Cleopatra was clearly, like the false love he celebrates in the Sonnets, a tawny, and he shows no awareness of her Greek descent. It is very significant that the gift Antony sends Cleopatra from Rome should be a pearl. The jewel in an Ethiop's ear held a strange fascination for Shakespeare; Troilus thinking of Cressida says, "Her bed is India, there she lies, a pearl" (an image which occurs only twenty lines from the word blackamoor), and it suggests that Shakespeare had himself observed the contrasting and complementary lustres of dark skin and the pearl. I do not know whether it is an accepted piece of stage business, but when Alexas finds difficulty in reporting Antony's words, saying, "His speech sticks in my heart", it seems right to me that Cleopatra with the words, "Mine ear must pluck it thence", should snatch the pearl, and put it to her ear as a piece of magic

to charm the memory of Antony's words to follow it. In Sonnet 27 the shadow or dream vision of Shakespeare's fair master-mistress "like a jewel hung in ghastly night, Makes black night beauteous". Other poets, of course, associate the pearl with India. Marlowe, for instance, in Tamburlaine has these lines :

Enchas'd with diamonds, sapphires, rubies,
And fairest pearl of wealthy India.

But though there is a reference to an "Afric potentate" later in this passage, there is no such interest as Shakespeare always shows in the contrast of colour and texture. India here is wealthy, not dark and mysterious and sensual. Desdemona, on the other hand, is the true jewel in an Ethiop's ear, and Othello shows his awareness of this by speaking of himself as "one whose hand,

Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe".

But Marlowe had never had the experience of the coming together of a fair jewel with a fairness which was dark.

Just as, earlier, Shakespeare's wonder at being able to see beauty in a dark woman is incorporated in the regular play upon the meaning of the word "fair", so his later grief at finding her not only lovely but faithless appears in similar play upon its antonym "foul". At first there is no bitterness in the word, it just means "ugly".

Then will I swear beauty herself is black
And all they foul that thy complexion lack. Sonnet 132.

(Here again it is clearly a case of skin, not hair colour. Morocco says to Portia, "Mislike me not for my complexion").

Then comes the disillusionment and Sonnet 147 ends :

My thoughts and my discourse as mad men's are,
At random from the truth vainly express'd.
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

Onions in his Shakespeare Glossary and the Oxford Dictionary give to Shakespeare the first use in modern English of the word dark in the sense of

evil, malicious or treacherous, a sense in which it continually occurs in the plays. In his dispair he rails at himself for having been foolish enough

To put fair truth upon so foul a face. Sonnet 137.

The loss of his fair friend to his dark woman be compares to a glorious morning with permits "the basest clouds to ride.

With ugly rack on his celestial face". Sonnet 33.

And the next sonnet Shakespeare reproaches his friend for the treachery and himself for his change of heart thus :

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
And make me travel out without my cloak,
To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke?

The reproach, coupled with the exhortation that his friend should have children, and the now familiar fair-foul opposition, is reflected in this stanza of Venus and Adonis :

What is thy body but a swallowing grave,
Seeming to bury that posterity
Which by the rights of time thou needs must have,
If thou destroy them not in dark obscurity?
If so, the world will hold thee in disdain,
Sith in thy pride so fair a hope is slain.

For me it is no accident of arrangement that Sonnet 129 on lust in action occurs in the sequence to black beauty. Adonis too knows the connection between dark skin and lust, for he swears,

For, by this black-faced night, desire's foul nurse. stanza 129.

And when Venus loses Adonis.....

Whereat amazed
Even so confounded in the dark she lay,
Having lost the fair discovery of her way.

For Lucrece too sin is associated with black and with black skin. In deciding not to conceal her rape by Tarquin she says,

My sable ground of sin I will not paint. R. of L. 1050.

Her sin has turned her black and, just as no cosmetics avail on dark skin, she will be unable to conceal her shame.

Shakespeare's final statement,

> For I have sworn thee fair; more perjur'd I
> To swear against the truth so foul a lie

sums up the association of darkness of skin, beauty and treachery, and with this sense of the word foul in our memory we can perceive the depth of experience in Antony's cry when he has been deserted by Cleopatra and defeated,

> This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me.

She has behaved "like a right Gipsy" and how much is lost here if we do not think of her as dark-skinned. The complex antithesis of fairness and foulness which sprang from the lust and loveliness and deceit of Shakespeare's dark love passes later as a pattern well beyond the scope of sex. The confusion established by the witches in Macbeth is stated in their chant, "Fair is foul and foul is fair", and Macbeth's first words, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen", are an interesting example of the extension of a set of associations beyond the original experience. This fair-foul pattern extends beyond Shakespeare's sexual life to became a basic dialectical position and is close to the kernel of his pervasive bitterness. It thus becomes imposed upon the language and the pattern of English thought, through the special meanings which he gave to the words dark, foul, black and gloomy.

Again the question arises. Who was it who gave Shakespeare this experience? Was Lucy Negro really black and was she the person? It is absurd to treat the enquiry as a sacrilegious prying into the secrets of a great national figure. Shakespeare made no secret of it in his own day, for his sonnets were written to perpetuate the story, not only among his private friends but for posterity.

> Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
> Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,
> And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse.

Certain conclusions seem to me to be inevitable. He somehow fell under the charm of dark skin. There were more opportunities than Lucy Negro.

She might have been a gipsy, a North-African or North-American slave, for such did appear in London in his day. Black musicians of the type associated with the commedia dell'arte and the courts of Italian princes performed in Elizabethan entertainments. Music is provided by such blackamoors in Love's Labours Lost, a play in which he shows such a curious and unnecessary interest in blackness. He must, soon after coming to London, have fallen in love with a dark-skinned woman, whether black, tawny or gipsy it is difficult to establish from internal evidence, for it seems that all three terms meant much the same to Shakespeare, when applied to skin colour. He gave her a pearl which, at her ear, contrasted with and revealed her dusky beauty. The tenderness with which he deals with black children suggests that he contemplated having a child by her. She was faithless and did him double injury by stealing his fair friend, and she in whose conventionally foul colour he had discovered greatest beauty revealed herself as foul in nature. I cannot conceive it possible for anyone who had not loved a dark woman to have given such passionate lines as these to Claudio in his contemplation of death :

If I must die,
I will encounter darkness as a bride,
And hug it in mine arms.

Gwyn Williams.

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